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M'Culloch's Lectures on
Liberal Education
1819

The Nature and Uses of a Liberal Education illustrated,

BEING A

LECTURE,

DELIVERED

AT THE

OPENING OF THE BUILDING,

ERECTED FOR THE

ACCOMMODATION OF THE CLASSES

OF THE

Pictou Academical Institution.

By THOMAS M'CULLOCH.

• • • •

Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

PROVERBS.

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PUBLISHED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE INSTITUTION.

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The following LECTURE *was not designed for the press: but the* TRUSTEES, *imagining that it contained some statements, which, if generally understood in this Province, would prove subservient to the interests of Literature, requested the Author to furnish them with a copy for the purpose of publication.*

A LECTURE, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

THE original conformation and state of the human mind, connected with the peculiarity of those circumstances in which man is placed, evidently show that he has been designed for intellectual and moral improvement. Whether he possesses any innate sentiment or principle of knowledge, has been long the subject of philosophical dispute: But, that, in the first stages of his existence, he is destitute of that knowledge and government of himself, which are necessary for his preservation, good conduct, and happiness in life, has never been denied. With numerous wants and an important station in the scale of being assigned him, he neither knows how the first may be supplied, nor the ends and purposes of the last, fulfilled.

Under these disadvantages, however, the human mind possesses the *stamina* of subsequent improvement. Its operations indicate a susceptibility of receiving impressions and also a desire to receive them; and to supply its original want of intelligence and qualify itself for a course of activity and happiness, is the original tendency of these operations. In the structure of mind a principle of curiosity constitutes a prominent feature; and, in connexion with this principle, it is susceptible of various modes of acting which tend to gratify curiosity by the acquisition of knowledge.

Besides, it may be observed, that man is placed in circumstances, which, by exercising the powers of his mind, arouse its energies. As a part of creation, he is surrounded by a multiplicity of objects which attract attention and excite curiosity; and the knowledge which he acquires by these means, ultimately conducts him to action and forms his character. In this point of view, creation and providence combined, afford a system of

education for man. Objects and events enlarge his intelligence, and influence those principles of his mind which are the sources of action.

But, though the situation of every human being renders the acquisition of a certain degree of intelligence and activity unavoidable; no individual can, by his own observation and experience, acquire that intellectual and moral improvement for which man is designed. Besides, in the first stages of existence, a variety of circumstances combine to abstract attention from improvement to pleasure, and thus, to impede the enlargement of the intellectual faculties and deprave the heart. To guard against these evils, therefore, divine wisdom has placed man, during the early period of life, in a state of dependence; that the knowledge of parents might promote the improvement of children, and the wisdom of age counteract the follies of youth.

Accordingly, in all ages, this general arrangement of providence has been well understood. Wherever society has existed, the education of youth has been viewed as involving in it alike the improvement of the individual and the prosperity of the whole; and where public arrangements have been regulated by enlightened views, it has uniformly received a corresponding degree of attention. It may be also observed, that, in every age and country, the object of education has been radically the same. Considering the susceptibility of the human mind to receive impressions, it has been conducted upon the principle of removing from the presence of youth every thing tending to depravity of disposition, and of exhibiting whatever appeared to be good and useful and calculated to encourage imitation.

In the early stages of society, however, the system of instruction, both in its extent and operation, behoved to be exceedingly circumscribed. Restricted to traditionary reports, a few maxims of wisdom, and the knowledge of events within a very limited circle, it could afford little scope for expansion of intellect, and few motives for the performance of many of those actions which are

the best ornaments of the human character, and most advantageous to mankind. Accordingly, in marking the fruits of education, as they are exemplified in unrefined society, we perceive knowledge restricted to a few general principles, and conduct perhaps displaying the more hardy virtues; but we observe little discernment in the application of general principles, and few of those mild operations of the heart, which indicate universal benevolence.

In tracing the progress of education, the effects resulting from the invention of letters and the art of printing, ought not to be overlooked. By these means, the information of past ages is transmitted to the present; and every additional discovery and invention, communicated with ease to the various sections of civilized society. As tending to the diffusion of knowledge, therefore, their influence upon the intellectual and moral character of man, must have been great and important. Besides, wherever they have been introduced, they also appear to have altered considerably the object of public instruction. It thence became the employment of teachers to communicate to their pupils not only the principles of knowledge, but also those qualifications which might afford them access to the sources of intelligence, and enable them to transfer their knowledge to others: and, accordingly, reading, writing, and a few additional branches of learning most immediately connected with the ordinary business of life, every where constitute the general system of public education.

No civilized nation, however, has been satisfied with this degree of instruction. Both the wants of society, and that enlargement of the desire of knowledge which uniformly attends the diffusion of intelligence, have rendered an extension of the system of education a necessary appendage to the social state. To this object, accordingly, enlightened individuals and governments have turned their attention and founded seminaries, in which youth might receive a liberal education: and wherever such institutions have flourished, they have been viewed as ornaments of society and tests of the wis-

dom of those who maintained them, as barriers against barbarism, and the best rational means for the improvement of the world.

In connexion with these remarks, it is necessary to advert to the opposers of a liberal education; for such have existed in all communities. In the scale of intelligence and public spirit, however, they have rarely occupied a conspicuous station. They have usually been strangers to the nature of learning, and to its influence upon the affairs of society; and, for these reasons, unable to appreciate its value. Against their opposition literature has always enjoyed the support of the intelligent, and, in proportion as a liberal education has exemplified its excellence, its antagonists have dwindled into insignificance: and literary institutions have been cherished, and multiplied, and numerously attended.

With respect to you, Gentlemen, I by no means conceive the defence of a liberal education to be a necessary point. But, to know its advantages, may add ardour to application, and rapidity to improvement; and, therefore, I beg leave to state to you some of those effects, which result from a well conducted system of instruction in the higher branches of learning. Upon the discussion of this topic, I enter with the greater pleasure; because your progress in literature has already afforded you a partial knowledge of its value, and will also now assist you to appreciate, according to their importance, those observations which I may have occasion to make.

Before proceeding to illustrate this subject, it might, perhaps, be requisite to specify in what a liberal education consists. But, without attempting to define a term which includes a variety of parts so extensive, at present I would only observe, that it denotes instruction in those branches of learning which are contemplated in this, and usually taught in similar, institutions. Its primary object is knowledge which could not be easily acquired in any other way: its ends, the improvement of man in intelligence and moral principle, as the basis of his subsequent duty and happiness. Viewing its ob-

ject as knowledge, it is merely an enlargement of that system of discipline which commences its operation upon man with the first expansion of his intellectual powers. With respect to its ends, whether it be entitled to a high appreciation, must be ascertained by its utility.

That we may form a correct estimate of the utility of a liberal education, it is necessary that we previously entertain just views of the character and relations of man. We must not consider the human race as solitary individuals, *nati consumere fruges ;* beings designed to receive so much food, perform so many corporeal exertions, and then sink into oblivion. Man must be viewed as an intelligent being ; and not only possessing powers of knowledge, but placed amid the works of creation, that, by exercising these powers, he may increase his knowledge and intellectual excellence. We must consider him as he exists in society, having property, social relations, and an interest in the general prosperity : And we must view society itself, merely as a link in the chain of existence, and equally connected with the past and with future ages. In these circumstances the system of liberal education originated ; and it might be very easily shown, that, in reference to them all, it is productive of numerous advantages. But, at present, I shall chiefly direct your attention to such illustrations as are derived from the relation of man to the social state.

By observing the nature of society, you will perceive, that an important part of the duty of man, arises out of his relations in life. The existence of a social state produces a variety of offices and duties, which, by promoting the safety and comfort of the individual parts of society, ultimately tend to the benefit of the whole : And I think it will be readily admitted, that no person can perform a duty, unless he have previously ascertained both its nature and the mode of performance. Viewing knowledge, then, as the basis of duty, it is equally evident that no human capacity, during the short period of life, is able to collect information sufficient for the discharge of every duty which society requires. On this account necessity has forced upon man a division of in-

tellectual as well as manual labour, which equally promotes the perfection of knowledge and duty. In the ordinary business of life this principle is well understood. Were every man to provide for his own wants, his skill in the various departments of labour, behoved to be small: but where each individual selects a particular occupation; by concentrating exertion upon one object, he acquires a degree of excellence which increases knowledge and gives perfection to art. If, then, this division of labour be necessary in order to secure intelligence in the common avocations of life, it must be much more requisite with respect to those offices and duties, which require a species of knowledge unattainable by ordinary observation and experience.

Having premised these remarks, I shall now proceed to show you how a liberal education bears upon the duties of the social state.

In society there are certain employments which have been denominated the learned professions; because a liberal education has been generally conceived to be requisite in order to a becomming discharge of their corresponding duties. These, professions as they regard the protection of property, the preservation of health, and the moral excellence and happiness of man, are important in their objects. Whether they ought to be distinct offices, and as such, require a preparatory course of education, will best appear from a consideration of their nature: and I shall first direct your attention to the profession of the law.

I formerly adverted to the situation of man in society, as possessing private property and also an interest in its general affairs. Every person enjoys life and a certain liberty of action. He may, also, hold such an interest in the objects around him as constitutes them his own; and besides, as a member of society, the general state of its affairs affects him in his individual capacity. For these reasons, the good of the whole and of the individual parts of society, requires, that every person blend, with attention to his personal interests, a due re-

gard for public and private justice: And hence the necessity of laws for the protection of life and property, and for promoting public utility.

I might here show you, that, from the complicated nature of society, the vast diversity of interests which law embraces, and the disposition of multitudes to promote their private advantage at the expense of public equity, the framing of wise and good laws, must require a degree of knowledge and acuteness of mind, which every man does not possess. But the connexion between office and corresponding knowledge, may be more extensively illustrated by a reference to the administration of justice.

A principal part of the benefit of law, proceeds from its correct and speedy application. From the tendency of its processes, delay and mistake become the sources of numerous evils. It might, therefore, be expected to constitute a provision of law, that, in the administration of justice, its utility should not be frustrated. Yet, upon these points, complaints have existed in every country, where the principles of legislation regulate the administration of justice. No species of professional men have been subjected to more reproach than the gentlemen of the bar. That some lawyers have rendered the interests of their clients subservient to their own advantage, may be readily granted. But when it is considered, that all legal proceedings are under the control of judges, whose integrity is the sole guarantee of their reputation and support; and also, that many good men, of profound abilities, with a view to unravel the intricacies, and simplify the system, of law, have exhausted their lives, and yet produced no radical amelioration; surely the slowness and apparent injustice of its processes ought to be referred to a cause more honourable to the profession than the want of uprightness.

A candid inquirer, I apprehend, will be able to trace such general complaints against lawyers to a different source. In an unrefined state of society, the objects

which law embraces, are comparatively few ; and the cases submitted to the cognizance of justice, admit proportionably few modifications : and, for these reasons, it is easily administered. But civilization both multiplies cases and increases their intricacy. One nation may possess a better system of laws than another : But, in every nation and under every code, as the wants, pursuits, acquisitions, and enjoyments of life, become more diversified ; the difficulty of terminating legal processes with dispatch and equity, must, from the nature of such circumstances, be proportionably increased.

As society improves, its laws, it is true, both in their object and language, may be better defined. But, extending to a greater variety of particulars, they become also more numerous; and when the objects embraced by the law are multiplied, the cases which require its decision, may be so variously modified, that, even when its statutes are easily understood, much difficulty may attend their applications. Besides, when good men frame laws to protect society, the bad exhaust their cunning in contriving means to evade them. Against such evasions, therefore, it becomes a particular object of the law to provide : But it frequently happens that the very provision adds to the intricacy of statutes, and involves their application in doubt.

Many other circumstances which render an honourable practice of the law perplexing, might be enumerated. It is influenced by a multiplicity of particulars which escape the general observation of mankind. This might be illustrated by a reference to its forms and modes of expression, or to the fluctuating nature of customs and language. It might be shown from the frequency with which legal proceedings require, not merely an acquaintance with the principles of law, but, a knowledge of general science, chronology, and various other kinds of intelligence which comparatively few can attain : Or, I might turn your attention to that acuteness of thought, precision of language, and facility of expression, which those who must encounter the prejudiced and villainous part of the community, need. But it has already been sufficient-

ly shown, that the profession of the law requires a species of knowledge which the greater part of mankind have neither leisure nor opportunity to obtain. This, then, will conduct us to the following conclusions: That the profession of the law as a distinct office is necessary; and, that the education which qualifies for the discharge of its duties, is of essential importance to the interests of society.

Our attention may be next directed to the medical profession. Upon this part of the subject, however, few observations are requisite. The greater part of mankind are prone to prescribe; and, when assailed by disease, they are usually disposed to listen to advice. This originates in a persuasion that the aid of others may promote the restoration of health. Whether this object be entitled to a distinct office, will best appear by considering what knowledge is necessary in order to successful practice.

That surgical operations require an acquaintance with the structure of the human frame and with the subsequent treatment of wounds, is sufficiently obvious: and it is, I believe, usually admitted, that the former cannot be accurately acquired without actual dissection. It is no less obvious, that, in order to a successful treatment of disease in general, the exact nature and stage of each, and also the composition and powers of medicine, must be ascertained. Judicious prescription, therefore, must be preceded by intelligence, various in its nature and remote from ordinary observation.

The knowledge of these points, however, is the mere basis of the information necessary to successful practice. The medical art is usually conceived to consist simply in this, that certain symptoms indicate particular diseases, which again must be treated by appropriate specifics; and that an acquaintance with these constitutes the perfection of medical knowledge. But every intelligent practitioner knows, that, with respect to the knowledge of disease, what appear to be prominent symptoms, are frequently of trivial importance and more apt to mislead than direct. Besides, when the nature of disease has been ascertained, the mode of treatment is not always obvious.

You must have often observed, that, though the human race exhibit a general similarity of appearance, every individual has something peculiar both in structure of body and disposition of mind. How far this may proceed from original conformation or habit, I shall not at present consider. But I would observe that it indicates a diversity of constitution, which, in the event of disease, requires a corresponding peculiarity in the mode of treatment: and the adaptation of prescription demands a degree of intelligence which can be attained only by extensive and profound observation. More numerous illustrations might have been produced. I might have adverted to the difficulty arising from the obscurity and the complication of symptoms; or from the diversified appearances and obstinacy of disease; but the preceding statements will show you, that the health of society requires a distinct office and an appropriate education.

In directing your attention next to the clerical office, I may observe that its existence as a separate employment in society, has not been left to human determination. Revealed religion has prescribed the offices of the church; and, consequently, in this case, duty consists in the observance of appointed order. It must be remarked, however, that scripture has established an inseparable connexion between qualification and office: a public instructor in the church must be *apt to teach.* This prerequisite, you will perceive, includes two particulars: He must be a man of information, and also possess a facility of communicating knowledge. How then are these qualifications attained?

The discussion of this point necessarily leads me to advert to the opinion of those who imagine, that both the appointment and qualifications of a preacher of the gospel, are conferred in a supernatural manner. In support of this sentiment reference is, I believe, usually made to certain primitive teachers of christianity, who received from the Holy Spirit supernatural gifts. It might, therefore, be a sufficient reply, that these supported their claims by the signs of their office, and that, according to scriptural order, it is sufficiently early to admit

supernatural appointments in the church, when they are proved by supernatural powers. But, I would farther observe, that such an opinion is repugnant to the general scope of the christian dispensation. The doctrine and example of the primitive teachers of christianity, show, that the extraordinary cases which occurred in apostolic times, are not to be viewed as precedents; and also, that, in succeeding ages, supernatural calls and qualifications were never designed. In every place where the apostles preached the gospel with success, they introduced the order of the church. Instead of leaving its instruction to supernatural means, they ordained elders and enjoined that established rule should be in future observed; so that the only call to preach the gospel is the call of the church. Admitting this principle, then, supernatural qualifications are not to be expected; and, accordingly, the connexion of means and end pervades the whole christian system. With respect to the receivers of instruction, this is usually admitted. Even the pretenders to supernatural calls are not less eager than others, that the community should receive their doctrine. But it appears to me, that the word of God extends the arrangement equally to themselves and their hearers. The eleven apostles received the rudiments of knowledge by attendance upon the personal ministrations of Christ, and even the spostle Paul, urging Timothy to improvement, does not advise him to wait for supernatural revelations from the deity, but to exercise the powers of his mind upon what had been already revealed: *Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.* The operations of the Holy Spirit in these last days of the church, neither reveal new doctrines nor supersede the necessity of improving the means of knowledge: *We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed,....*

The friends of unlearned preachers, it is true, usually refer to their labours as equally or perhaps more profitable, than the instructions of those who have received a liberal education. To this point I have turned your attention, with the view of stating to you several mistakes respecting, it into which persons, otherwise

shrewd and sensible, have inadvertently fallen. That some preachers of ordinary intelligence have been exceedingly useful, and also, that men of learning have filled public offices in the church with little honour to themselves or profit to the community, may be readily admitted. But when you consider how many illiterate preachers have neither acquired respectability nor added to the progress of religion, and again, how many men of learning have adorned the pulpit, and, by their labours, contributed to extend the knowledge of the gospel; you will perceive that such a concession proves nothing against the utility of a liberal education. A just estimate requires that both parties be viewed as in every other respect equal; and, then, I think, the importance of a liberal education may be very easily shown. Viewing each merely as the vehicle of knowledge, surely, he who has acquired the most, and also the best mode of communication, must be best qualified to teach. The uninformed have been apt to imagine, that sound intelligence has little connexion with religious attainment. But an opinion so repugnant to the improvement of human nature, needs not to be refuted. I would only remark that credulity with respect to the merits of illiterate clergymen, originates in the want of intelligence; and, accordingly, in every country, as the good sense of mankind surmounts ignorance, they gradually disappear.

I am aware, that there are many clergymen, sensible and successful, who have neither been educated at Academy nor College; and it is, I believe, by adverting to these that many persons deceive themselves respecting the utility of a liberal education. But examples of this kind afford no ground for conclusions unfavourable to learning. On the contrary, they are proofs of its value: investigation will discover that these clergymen have become judicious and successful, by using the very means which a liberal education prescribes. In the discussion of this point, the utility of learning and the necessity of attending a public seminary in order to acquire it, are generally confounded. These, however, are not necessarily connected. Education may not only be conferred in private, but men of strong natural parts may, by self-

instruction, arrive at eminence in learning: and by such means all intelligent and useful clergymen, who have not been educated at a public seminary, have attained those qualifications, which prepare them for the discharge of their official duties. Of this you will be convinced by a slight attention to the scope of the clerical office. Its primary object is the communication of knowledge: this, therefore, a clergyman must previously possess; and I have already shown you, that it is not now a supernatural gift.

The question, then, is not, whether a minister of the gospel need education, but, to what extent it is necessary; and every judicious clergyman, either self-taught or educated by others, will acquiesce in the remark, that, without extensive studies, adequate preparation for public teaching cannot be attained. This might be illustrated by showing you how a knowledge of various languages and of almost every other branch of literature, tends to the elucidation of Scripture; but, at present, I shall restrict myself to an illustration, the force of which you are more likely to feel. In a public teacher the power of communication is as requisite as the possession of knowledge; and when you consider the ends of religion, you will easily perceive, that accuracy of statement is vastly important. But where there is knowledge, a facility of communication is not always its attendant.—Were I to ask you, then, how this is attained, experience has prepared you to reply, only by years of painful application, aided alike by instruction and criticism.

Having taken this view of the learned professions, the additional remark, that a liberal education confers the intelligence requisite for the discharge of their various duties, would sufficiently show its importance. But, as the general scope of an academical course, is not well understood, it may not be unnecessary to state a few particulars respecting its nature and influence, and also concerning the mode in which it is conducted.

It is, I believe, generally imagined, that to communicate a knowledge of particulars which could not be easily obtained by any other means, is the principal design of the system of liberal education. But this constitutes only the minor part of its advantages; and were a stu-

dent to leave College without any other acquisition, he would find himself exceedingly ill qualified for discharging the duties of a learned profession. The following observations will show you that it embraces a much more extensive range.

The object of education is not merely knowledge but science.

You are already aware, that, in the expansion of human intellect, individual objects and circumstances are the first materials of knowledge; and also, that, when the knowledge of these is attained, it conducts the mind to a species of intelligence, related to the individuals and yet distinct in its nature. A comparison of these having discovered their common quality, terms applicable to a whole genus and species, are introduced into language; and when a term of this kind is compared with its general quality, the knowledge of an abstract truth or principle is obtained. These principles are the primary objects of science, which, in its various parts, constitues the materials of a learned education. This, as it communicates knowledge, is valuable ; but, as presenting knowledge in a scientific form, it is entitled to a higher appreciation. A general principle applies equally to what passes within our own observation and to every other case of the same nature. This might be illustrated by a reference to any department of science : but you already know the logical axiom, that whatever is true of the genus is true of the subordinate species and individuals. A liberal education, then, not only brings into view the knowledge of individual facts, but presents them arranged and classified under general principles ; and by these means knowledge is more easily retained ; progress, faciltated ; and the basis of subsequent improvement, laid.

But, farther, a liberal education is subservient to the gradual expansion of the intellectual powers.

It is an important fact in the history of mind, that it is strongly affected by its own operations. This circumstance is well understood in the business of life. Every intelligent man is aware of the debasing tendency of vice; and, hence, to check the vicious propensities of youth, and to remove them from the influence of such example as might produce depravity of principle, are primary ob-

jects in every well regulated system of discipline. In estimating education with respect to knowledge, however, its influence upon mind is frequently overlooked; and this, I apprehend, is a principal reason why some persons are so inimical to instruction in the higher branches of literature. Its sole object they conceive to be the communication of so much knowledge, useful, perhaps, to persons exercising a learned profession, but of little importance to the rest of society. In a liberal education, however, the acquisition of knowledge is connected with a gradual expansion of the intellectual powers; so that, beside a certain *quantum* of information, the mind has acquired a facility of adding to its stock. This may be illustrated by a reference to the science of numbers. A person may find the simple rules of arithmetic exceedingly puzzling, but afterward perform its most complex processes with ease. This can be explained only by that expansion of intellect which the progress of study has conferred upon the mind.

The same remark is applicable to every part of education according to the most extensive meaning of that term. Whether we view man as possessing body or mind, it may be observed that he has originally a power of action, but without a capacity of directing his activity to any useful purpose. To whatever pursuit his attention is turned, repeated efforts are requisite in order to propriety of acting. But by these means a habit is implanted in the human constitution. Now, an analysis of the nature of habit discovers that there has been not merely the frequent repetition of an action; a facility of performance and not unfrequently a disposition to repeat the operation have been also acquired. It is thus by habit that man improves, and ultimately arrives at excellence both in corporeal and mental exertions. Applying these remarks, then, to education as it affords the means of knowledge, it is evident that the improvement of the intellectual faculties must be proportioned to the extent of the system; and, consequently, that a liberal education communicates both a species and a degree of intelligence which cannot be otherwise acquired.

In stating the influence of education upon mental

improvement, the particular nature of those habits which it produces, ought not to be overlooked. A liberal education, beside unfolding the principles of science, is particularly calculated to qualify the mind both for the acquisition and the communication of knowledge. In every well regulated seminary, it is so conducted as to exercise the thinking powers ; and, also, to connect the acquisition of knowledge with a corresponding improvement in the power of communication. By these means, habits of accuracy with respect to connexion of thought and propriety of expression, are formed ; and these, you will observe, are qualifications which do not bear merely upon particular departments of science. They prepare the mind to consider correctly whatever may attract its attention, and to communicate its knowledge with scientific precision. Those, therefore, who have received the improvement, which a liberal education is designed to afford, are good scholars, and at the same time intelligent men.

As yet I have said nothing respecting the influence of a liberal education upon moral conduct. Now, I would observe that the habits which it implants in the mind, are alike friendly to rectitude of principle and propriety of action. Education, as communicating knowledge and intellectual habits, confers important qualifications for the performance of the various duties of life. A mind formed to intelligence is prepared to exemplify accuracy of view, whether the subject of its contemplation be a moral action or a physical phenomenon. Besides, a liberal education directly communicates the knowledge of moral principles. Ethics explain the various relations and duties of man ; and, from the nature of those views which they present, are calculated to impress upon the mind a conviction of the personal and public advantage of rectitude of conduct : and, in the study of divinity, the system of revealed religion is explained and enforced. In every well regulated seminary, also, the course of discipline presents a barrier to vice, and cherishes the performance of virtuous actions ; and, thus, moral principles are fortified by corresponding habits.

Men of learning, it is true, may not always be remarkable for their moral excellence. But it may be

safely affirmed that the person who has received a liberal education and does not afterward exemplify an attachment to good order and rectitude of conduct, has either disregarded instruction or received a subsequent education, by associating with the depraved part of society. I do not pretend that any system of education will change the heart, or conform the actions of man to the standard of divine law. This is the prerogative of the gospel impressed upon the mind by the Holy Spirit. But, that learning tends to curb vice, to cherish suavity of disposition, and to produce a deportment advantageous and laudable with respect to society, accords with universal experience: and, surely, what may bring the human race *not far from the kingdom of God*, is a valuable attainment.

Having made these remarks respecting the nature and influence of a liberal education, I may farther observe, that, in the disposition of its parts, it is adapted to the gradual improvement of the mind. I have made this observation, particularly with the view of adverting to some branches of literature, which, as not bearing directly upon the business of a learned profession, have been conceived by many to be unnecessary additions. Of this number is the study of the ancient languages.

It is, I apprehend, the opinion of those who are unfriendly to the study of ancient languages, that it merely affords a knowledge of the words and modes of expression employed by particular nations. Admitting this to be the case, it may be very easily shown that this knowledge leads to important consequences. I have already observed, that, in order to just views of a liberal education, it is necessary to consider man as a link in the chain of existence, equally connected with the past and succeeding ages. Now, it is upon an acquaintance with the past that present conduct is founded; and, consequently, the more extensive this knowledge is, the greater must be the intelligence of the mind. If any individual can, to his own experience, add the information acquired by others during former ages; his knowledge must be both more abundant and better established: and by the study of ancient languages, these ends are gained. By these means we associate, as it were, with the nations who used them; enter into their various transactions; mark

their improvement in the arts and sciences; ascertain the nature of their religion, modes of living, and laws; and, thus, trace their progress from barbarism to a state of refinement. Such researches, beside the gratification which they afford to an inquisitive mind, promote individual intelligence, and, frequently, the improvement of the social state.

With respect to the Hebrew and Greek languages I would merely remark, that no person who entertains just views of the nature of language, can conceive a knowledge of these to be of trivial importance to those persons whose office requires them to elucidate the scriptures. Upon the subject of the Latin, however, a few additional observations are requisite; because the study of this language being more general, is more frequently opposed. Premising, therefore, that opposition to this part of a liberal education, has usually proceeded from inadequate judges; I shall state to you some of those advantages which the study confers.

From knowledge acquired in the progress of education you are already aware, that, at one period, the power of the Romans, connected with their superior attainments in science and the arts of life, extended their language to almost every country of Europe. Wherever that nation enlarged their dominion, they also endeavoured to introduce their improvements; and the introduction of their language to a certain extent, followed as an unavoidable consequence. It, thence, became partly the medium of social intercourse, and a necessary means for the acquisition of knowledge. Besides, the nations of Europe, at that time emerging from a state of barbarism, were destitute of terms, by which an enlarged system of knowledge could be expressed. On this account, along with the intelligence of the Romans, their language was also adopted; and, for many centuries, became the language of law, medicine, religion, and literature. This measure, you will easily perceive, must have impeded the cultivation of modern languages; but its utility for the general diffusion of knowledge, has still continued its use to a certain extent in every European nation. From these remarks it is evident, that to the professional man who would secure to himself the intel-

ligence of former ages or of distant nations, an acquaintance with this language must be a valuable attainment. Besides, it may be observed, that by custom its terms and modes of expression are so interwoven with the business of the learned professions, that the professional man who has not received this branch of education, can neither acquire nor communicate his knowledge with ease and advantage.

But, farther, a view of the etymology of the English language, will illustrate the importance of the Latin as a part of education. In tracing the progress of civilization in Europe, we perceive these nations enriched with the spoils of their conquerors. Receiving from the Romans an acquaintance with science and the arts of life, the poverty of their own languages induced them also to adopt the terms by which these were expressed. Accordingly, a great part of the English language is derived from this source; and, on this account, beside the knowledge of the general structure of language and a vast variety of other information, which the study of the Latin affords, it communicates an acquaintance with the terms and idioms of the English, which could not by any other means be scientifically acquired in much less time, than is usually expended upon this branch of a liberal education.

From these remarks you will perceive the importance of this part of learning. At the same time they tend to illustrate the general point, that a liberal education in the disposition of its parts, is adapted to the gradual expansion of the intellectual powers. To this subject I would particularly direct your attention; because it is not in general considered according to its importance. Were the relation which the different parts of learning bear to the progressive enlargement of mind better understood; the general system of education, instead of meeting reproach, would, I am persuaded, be viewed with admiration, as a structure reared by the wisdom of ages. The profound speculations of science are, from their nature, not easily comprehended. To persons, therefore, who have not been habituated to observe that close connexion of thought which such investigations require, they must appear doubly intricate. Besides, it may be observed, that science as well as art, has its appropriat-

terms ; and, consequently, ignorance of scientific terms behoved to increase their perplexity. But to obviate these difficulties, the arrangements of a liberal education are such, that the previous parts confer both a species of knowledge and a degree of intelligence, which constitute a useful introduction to those that succeed. It is not necessary that I illustrate this remark by particular examples. You have only to consider what knowledge a learned profession requires, and by what means it may be most easily attained ; and you will perceive that the introductory parts of a liberal education are of essential importance for the improvement of the mind, and also for the acquisition of that knowledge which bears upon the business of life.

In the preceding observations I have considered literature, chiefly in its relations to professional men. It embraces, however, a much more extensive range. There are comparatively few transactions in life which it does not affect ; and it may be farther observed that a gradual disclosure of its value, is every day extending its influence. As an illustration of this fact, I may refer you to the surprising rapidity with which the arts of life have of late years advanced toward perfection. Formerly, wherever learning was cultivated, its influence upon the affairs of society, was also experienced ; but, through mistaken views, its operation was much circumscribed. It had been generally supposed that the person designed for a mechanical employment, could derive little advantage from a liberal education. Progress in the arts of civilized life was thus left to that part of society, who, whatever mechanical habits of ingenuity they might acquire, possessed least of that intelligence which is the true basis of improvement ; and thus the subserviency of science to art, was in general overlooked. Every avocation in life, however, may be traced to general principles ; and perfection requires that these be observed. Correct views upon this point have at length produced an extensive enlargement of the bounds of science, and a corresponding abridgment of human labour. Men of science, by investigating the principles which regulate art, have illustrated the influence of knowledge upon mechanical operations, and communicated to the arts of life a degree of

perfection of which they had not been previously conceived to be susceptible. When I add, that these observations are applicable to almost every active employment of man, it will afford you an extensive view of the vast utility of a liberal education.

The preceding details will suggest to you, how literature tends to the improvement and happiness of the social state. Viewing society as composed of parts, it is evident, that, as these individually are guided by principles of sound intelligence, they add to the general amount of duty, and consequently to the means of enjoyment.

But beside the consideration of public utility, a liberal education is attended by many other consequences which render it a desirable attainment. The acquisition of knowledge is not without pain; but this is more than counterbalanced by those numerous sources of enjoyment which it unfolds to the mind: and intellectual pleasure is a species of gratification which few who feel, are willing to resign. Nor ought it to be overlooked, that intelligence, by enlarging the sphere of usefulness, amplifies also the pleasure of doing good. Besides, education communicates a dignity to the human character, which neither rank nor wealth is sufficient to purchase; and it may be farther observed, that, in this province, it presents prospects well calculated to concentrate the energies of your minds upon literary studies. The present state of the learned professions affords extensive scope to men of talents and literature. Various causes have as yet combined to impede the progress of education; and these offices have not been always filled by persons qualified to occupy stations so important. But this province now exhibits many proofs of a desire for literary improvement; and very soon, in this as in other countries, ignorance will find its own station; and natural abilities cultivated by literary studies, raise their possessors to the first rank in society and to the principal offices of honour and profit.

In placing before you these cheering prospects, let me remind you also to whom you owe them. The generosity of the public has provided for you means of instruction, which the infant state of society in this province had withheld from themselves; and upon an occasion so

interesting to literature, to the general affairs of the province, and to you, I should be wanting in duty, did I not direct your gratitude to those public spirited individuals, by whose pecuniary aid this seminary has arrived at its present state; and particularly to those, who, in its difficulties, have stood by it; in public and private stations, fought its battles; and employed their reputation and influence to make it respectable. You, also, owe much to those ladies of this place who have formed themselves into a society for the beneficent purpose of enlarging the library of the institution. Already, the fruits of their generosity constitute its principal ornament; and their persevering activity will soon render their donations, a noble monument of the patriotic and enlightened views.

In connexion with these remarks let me farther remind you, that, to your present situation, there is attached a solemn responsibility. This institution is partly an experiment of the value of literature: friends and foes are waiting for the result with anxiety; and much depends upon your improvement and conduct. The approbation of your best friends, the honour of this seminary, your reputation, your prospects in life, are at stake. What an honourable field for activity is here presented! Should these motives, arousing exertion, conduct you to excellence, how noble the result!

But it is not merely improvement in knowledge that I would wish you to acquire. Intellectual endowments, even in the eyes of society, do not compensate for the want of goodness of heart and rectitude of conduct. There is also a higher tribunal at which your character must soon be weighed; and there the heart purified by the wisdom from above, and full of mercy and good fruits, alone is approved. It must, therefore, be your daily study, to blend religious improvement with literary acquisitions. By these means and by these only, you will become truly respectable, do honour to this institution, and be prepared to fulfil the duties of important stations: and permit me to add, that to see you, by a course of steady integrity, arriving at these stations and honouring them by your talents and virtues, will prove to me a principal consolation of life.

THE END.

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